



St Stephen in Brannel Parish Council

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Stress Policy¹

St Stephen in Brannel Parish Council are committed to protecting the health, safety and welfare of all Council employees. Members recognise that workplace stress is a health and safety issue and acknowledge the importance of identifying and reducing workplace stress.

What is stress?

Stress is defined as the 'adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or other types of demand placed on them'. Most staff benefit from a certain amount of pressure in their work. It can keep them motivated and give a sense of ambition. However, when there is too much pressure placed on them, they can become overloaded. Stress can affect the health of staff, reduce their productivity and lead to performance issues.

Stress is not an illness, but the psychological impact can lead to conditions such as anxiety and depression. Stress, anxiety and depression can also increase the risk of conditions like heart disease, back pain, gastrointestinal illnesses or skin conditions.

What causes stress?

There can be a variety of causes of stress. For example, financial problems, difficulties in personal relationships or moving house can all cause stress. Work can also cause stress. The HSE (Health and Safety Executive) has identified the six primary causes of work-related stress to be:

The **demands** of the job - staff can become overloaded if they cannot cope with the amount of work or type of work they are asked to do

Amount of **control** over work - staff can feel disaffected and perform poorly if they have no say over how and when they do their work

Support from managers and colleagues - levels of sickness absence often rise if staff feel they cannot talk to managers about issues troubling them

Relationships at work - a failure to build relationships based on good behaviour and trust can lead to problems related to discipline, grievances and bullying

How a **role** fits within the organisation - staff will feel anxious about their work and the organisation if they don't know what is expected of them and/or understand how their work fits into the objectives of the organisation

Change and how it is managed - change needs to be managed effectively or it can lead to huge uncertainty and insecurity.

Responsibilities:

¹ Adopted by Full Council at the meeting held on Wednesday 1st August 2018 under minute number FPC182/18. Due for review in August 2021.

Council's (Through the Employment & Cemeteries committee with support from the Clerk):

- Conduct and implement recommendations of risks assessments within their jurisdiction.
- Ensure good communication between management and staff, particularly where there are organisational and procedural changes.
- Ensure staff are fully trained to discharge their duties.
- Ensure staff are provided with meaningful developmental opportunities.
- Monitor workloads to ensure that people are not overloaded.
- Monitor working hours and overtime to ensure that staff are not overworking. Monitor holidays to ensure that staff are taking their full entitlement.
- Attend training as requested in good management practice and health and safety.
- Ensure that bullying and harassment is not tolerated within their jurisdiction.
- Be vigilant and offer additional support to a member of staff who is experiencing stress outside work e.g. bereavement or separation.
- To ensure that, in the event of a member of staff being absent from work as a result of stress in their job:
 1. A review of the risk assessment has been completed.
 2. Any further controls identified following the assessment process are implemented

Employee's:

- To acknowledge that the management of health and stress hazards in the workplace is a joint responsibility between the Parish Council and its employees.
- To take personal preventative action in terms of stress management.
- To highlight to the Council through the correct procedure working practices and environments which, if allowed to continue, may lead to stress or other health related hazards.
- To identify health and stress related hazards in themselves, at the earliest opportunity, and to seek appropriate help.
- To avoid harmful ways of coping with stress, such as being aware that excessive drinking and smoking can increase stress levels.
- To respect the needs of others and to take responsibility for actions which may have an effect on the health of other individuals.
- To ensure annual leave is used to good effect in reducing stress hazards
- Raise issues of concern with the Clerk or Chairman of the Employment and Cemeteries committee.
- Accept opportunities for counselling when recommended.

Whenever feasible, the Council will encourage and support employees to take steps to manage their own stress. Support may be through the application of Council policies— such as *Dignity at Work* and/or by encouraging staff to consult their own General Practitioner, or other medical support as may be appropriate.